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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E, AF/EX, DS/IP/AF, DS/TIA/ITA,
DS/IP/SPC/SO
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: ERITREAN FUEL AND ELECTRICITY: FROM BAD TO WORSE

REF: A. ASMARA 300

[B](#). ASMARA 312

[C](#). ASMARA 322

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: Eritrea's electricity supplier announced that on June 27 electricity supplies in Asmara will shut down for 11 hours per day for an indefinite period. A run on gasoline occurred on June 26, leading filling stations to suspend servicing customers. All forms of cooking fuel remain scarce. End Summary.

13 HOURS OF ELECTRICITY PER DAY IN ASMARA

[2](#). (C) An Eritrean Electric Authority (EEA) statement released June 25 said effective June 27 there will be a regular, scheduled, and ongoing nightly power outage across the main power grid from 2130 to 0830 for an indeterminate length of time. A well-placed Embassy source familiar with Eritrea's electrical grid told Emboff that only two or three months of the heavy fuel oil needed to power the generators in Hirgigo (near Massawa) remain. Total's Managing Director for Eritrea (protect) told Emboffs in early June Eritrea's fuel supplies, including the fuel for electricity generation, would be depleted beginning in early July (Ref A).

A RUN ON AUTOMOTIVE GASOLINE

[3](#). (SBU) Early in morning on June 26, gasoline stations in Asmara experienced a run on gasoline, leading the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) to suspend commercial gasoline sales at 0900. A filling station two blocks from the Embassy had approximately 50 cars waiting for fuel at the time of the cutoff.

NO FUEL FOR COOKING

[4](#). (SBU) Eritrea has depleted its supplies of cooking fuel. Propane disappeared in May, leading customers to substitute kerosene, which was extremely scarce by mid June. Eritreans then substituted charcoal, which is now nearly unavailable. The prohibitively high cost of electricity prevents most Eritreans from using it for cooking. Wood is not an option for cooking; Eritrea is a heavily deforested country with laws against cutting live trees. Relatively well-paid Embassy LES requested discarded cardboard boxes to use as cooking fuel.

[5](#). (C) Comment: Eritrea's fuel situation continues to

deteriorate after the GSE failed to pay its Kuwaiti suppliers (Ref A), and a delay in a reported promise from the Sudanese to send a fuel shipment. Until now, electricity and automotive gasoline were the only readily available commodities the GSE's state-run distribution system reliably provided. Eritreans desperately seek fuel of all varieties, potentially leading to a decline of the public's confidence in the GSE's ability to provide basic goods and services, and leading to unknown consequences. End Comment.
MCMULLEN